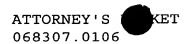<u>WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:</u>

    1.   A method for monitoring browsing activity of a visitor to a Web site, comprising:

    loading a client program into an operating environment of a client machine of a visitor to a Web site;

    incrementing a reference count associated with the client program to maintain persistence of the client program in the operating environment during browsing by the visitor across a plurality of Web pages of the Web site;

    client browsing activity of the visitor across the Web pages with the client program; and

    uploading an indication of the browsing activity of the visitor over a network for processing.
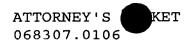
    2.   The method of Claim 1, further comprising decrementing the reference count upon a specified event for automatic unloading of the client program from the operating environment of the client machine.

    3.   The method of Claim 1, wherein the client program comprises a self-decrementing object and the reference count is a reference count for the self-decrementing object.

    4.   The method of Claim 1, wherein the client program comprises a component object model (COM) object and the reference count is a reference count for the COM object.

    5.   The method of Claim 1, wherein the client program comprises an Active X control.

6.   The method of Claim 1, wherein the reference count is incremented to a value greater than one.

5   7.   The method of Claim 6, further comprising:

decrementing the reference count to zero upon a specified event; and

automatically unloading the client program from the operating environment of the client machine upon a zero

10   reference count.

8.   A client-side program for monitoring the browsing activity of a visitor to a Web site, comprising:

a medium; and

logic encoded on the medium, the logic operable to
5 run in an operating environment of a client machine of a visitor to a Web site, increment a reference count associated with the program to maintain persistence of the program during browsing activity of the visitor across a plurality of Web pages of the Web site, monitor
10 browsing activity of the visitor across the Web pages and upload an indication of the browsing activity over a network for processing.

9.   The client-side program of Claim 8, the logic
15 further operable to decrement the reference count upon a specified event for automatic unloading of the program from the operating environment of the client machine.

10.   The client-side program of Claim 8, wherein the
20 logic comprises a self-decrementing object and the reference count is a reference count for the self-decrementing object.

11.   The client-side program of Claim 8, wherein the
25 logic comprises a component object model (COM) object and the reference count is a reference count for the COM object.

12.   The client-side program of Claim 8, wherein the
30 program comprises an Active X control.

13. The client-side program of Claim 8, the logic operable to increment the reference count to a value greater than one.

14. The client-side program of Claim 13, the logic further operable to decrement the reference count to zero upon a specified event and automatically unload the program from the operating environment of the client machine upon a zero reference count.

15.   A monitoring program for monitoring the activity of a visitor to a Web site from a client machine of the visitor, comprising:

means for incrementing a reference count associated with the monitoring program to maintain persistence of the monitoring program in an operating environment of the client machine during browsing activity of the visitor across a plurality of Web pages of the Web site;

means for monitoring browsing activity of the visitor across the Web pages with the monitoring program; and

means for uploading an indication of the browsing activity over a network for processing.

16.   The monitoring program of Claim 15, further comprising means for decrementing the reference count upon a specified event for automatic unloading of the monitoring program from the operating environment of the client machine.

17.   The monitoring program of Claim 15, wherein the monitoring program comprises a self-decrementing object and the reference count is a reference count for the self-decrementing object.

18.   The monitoring program of Claim 15, wherein the monitoring program comprises a component object model (COM) object and the reference count is a reference count for the COM object.

19.   The monitoring program of Claim 15, wherein the monitoring program comprises an Active X control.

20. The monitoring program of Claim 15, wherein the reference count is incremented to a value greater than one.

21. The monitoring program of Claim 15, further comprising:

means for decrementing the reference count to zero upon a specified event; and

means for automatically unloading the monitoring program from the operating environment of the client machine upon a zero reference count.

22. A method for controlling the persistence of a component object model (COM) object downloaded over the Internet and loaded into an operating environment of a

5   client machine, comprising:

incrementing an internal reference count of the COM object to a value greater than one to maintain persistence of the COM object in an operating environment of the client machine during browsing activity across a

10   plurality of Web pages; and

decrementing the internal reference count to zero upon a specified event for automatic unloading of the COM object from the operating environment of the client machine.

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23. The method of Claim 22, wherein the persistence of the COM object in the operating environment is maintained across a plurality of Web sites.

20   24. The method of Claim 22, wherein at least one of the Web pages is associated with a first Web site and at least one of the Web pages is associated with a second Web site distinct from the first Web site.